

◆ ◆ THE CRIME OF  
THE CULPRIT FAY

\* B L ROOPMAN'S \*

YULE ◆ GIFT ◆ TO ◆ HIS

FRIENDS 1890 ◆ ◆



*Cared by George Schumann*

THE CRIME .

OF THE

CULPRIT ❖ FAY

INTRODUCTORY TO DRAKE'S POEM

BY

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300 Copies Printed as Manuscript  
for Private Distribution

BURLINGTON VERMONT

1895

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R. S. Styles, Printer, Burlington, Vt.

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*TO*

*MY GENTLEST READER*

*MY WIFE*



# The Crime of the Culprit Fay.

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## I.

“Fairy, if thou would'st win my hand,  
'Tis not enough to vow and plead;  
Thy words I shall not understand,  
Until thou makest each a deed.”  
“Oh! name the deed that I must do,”  
The elf-knight cried, with lightened brow.  
“Nay,” answered she, “not one nor two,  
’Tis light if three release thy vow.”  
“A score were few,” his passion cried;  
“Oh! name them that I may begin.  
Sooner begun, the sooner won  
Those raptures that I pant to win.”  
The elf-maid with a rose-leaf screened  
Her fair cheek from the moonlight's ray;  
And while her suitor humbly leaned,  
Coldly bespoke the listening Fay:  
“A fiery gem, that beams afar,  
Tips the lone ice-peak with its spark,  
That underneath the Northern Star  
Pierces with white the wintry dark;  
And, one in heaven and one on earth,  
In emulation shine the pair,  
Till, crossed in contest o'er their worth,  
Outsweep the welkin's hosts of air.  
The star too firm is locked amid  
Its neighbor stars that round it shine;

That seek not,—but the gem I bid  
Thy hand to pluck and lay in mine.  
Then shalt thou bring from Afric shore  
A ruby by its side to gleam.  
Inland a jungle's waters pour  
Through cavern jaws an angry stream.  
Far under ground they darkly stray,  
Till into ocean's depths they glide;  
But midmost of their secret way  
An island's edges part the tide.  
The long reeds clash in rosy mist,  
The palms a ruddier glow return;  
For in the roof of amethyst  
A ruby's throbbing splendors burn.  
This gem I'd wear upon my breast  
As mortals wear the blushing rose.”  
She said, and smiled as if she guessed  
What praise the future should disclose.  
The Fairy started as to fly.  
“Nay, halt,” she cried; “one further task.  
Do this, and thou shalt satisfy  
The utmost that my pride will ask.  
Midway of India's mountain dells,  
There lies the topmost vale of earth;  
Where cometh no man, and none dwells  
That owneth elve or human birth;  
And, stationed in this voiceless vale,  
Four giants guard an ivory shrine;  
Beyond them, dwarfs in stony mail  
Face the four winds with flaming eyne.  
Within these ivory walls is laid  
A mantle that no like hath known.  
Of woven emerald dust 'twas made

For Asia's cloud-queen ages gone.  
She, when her love in battle fell,  
Vowed nevermore its pride to wear;  
So hid it in this secret dell,  
And gave it to these monsters' care.  
To them all slumber she denied,  
Such was her last and strict command,  
Save when the sun in heaven should ride,  
And darkness be on all the land."  
The Fairy spread his wings for flight.  
"And all," she added, "must be brought  
Ere thrice the moon renew her light,  
Or, though thou bringest all, 'tis naught."  
So spake she, and the Fairy, mute,  
Low bowed, then faced the Northern Star,  
And, earth light spurning with his foot,  
Shot flame-like upward and afar.

## II.

The level snow shines feebly white;  
A myriad stars are twinkling bright;  
But naught between may the winds enfold,  
Save the during dark and the deepening cold.  
Yet, look, where last the shorn sun set,  
What wavers amid the horizon's jet,  
As if a meteor's wandering spark  
Were breasting the flood of the lower dark,  
Or as if from the lands of warmth and bloom  
Had strayed a firefly into the gloom?  
Or is it the light of human wight  
Venturing lonely into the night?

'Tis not the blaze of wandering star,  
Nor gleam of firely strayed afar,  
Nor torch upborne o'er a mortal's way,  
But the far-seen lamp of the flying Fay.  
Straight before him its light is thrown,  
Into the dusk of the midnight zone,  
But his face with the Northern Star is lit.  
Not sad nor glad is the cast of it ;  
But he bears him as one that checks all  
thought

Save how his task may be soonest wrought.  
But look ! the darkness hath a bound,  
And the Fairy knows that the gem is found.  
Suddenly all the northern sky  
Begins to brighten steadily.  
The light of the star falls straight adown,  
As the point that hangs from a cavern's  
crown ;

While, e'en as the cave-floor a shaft returns,  
An earth-star amid the ice-field burns.  
'Tis the gem, which, formed of the fallen  
beams,

To its parent star in answer gleams.  
Swifter the Fairy cleaves the dark ;  
But the boreal elves his purpose mark,  
And down, with a rush of arrowy fire,  
They sweep to balk his bold desire.  
They brush his face with their flamy wings,  
Round him they whirl in dizzying rings.  
Anon, with a clash of thunder sound,  
A myriad spears inclose him round.  
But his breast is clad with a shield of proof,  
And the boldest shrinks from his blade aloof.

Still, through the sullenly parting lines,  
The light of the gem on the Fairy shines,  
Nor all their warlock rout and blaze  
Can turn from the jewel his steadfast gaze.  
Foiled and baffled the hosts retreat ;  
But the eldritch elves of hail and sleet,  
With the pallid sprites of the polar snow,  
Assault him above, around, below.  
A blackness of whiteness o'er all they cast ;  
They buffet his ears with the roaring blast ;  
But, steady through all their whirling fray,  
The diamond shoots its piercing ray ;  
And still, though blown aback and awry,  
To its light the Fairy draws anigh.  
First the light of his lamp grew dim,  
Then his face flushed bright 'neath his viz-  
or's brim ;  
Now the gem in his hand he holds,  
And now it is deep in his girdle's folds.  
Blow wind, beat hail, it shall help you none ;  
All ways are south and the gem is gone.

## III.

Noon slumbers on the Afric swamp,  
And the Fay is lost in its tangles damp.  
"Help, oh ! help me," piped a cry.  
Round looked the Fairy hurriedly.  
"Help me !" The wailing rose and sank,  
Himseemed in the ooze of a brooklet's bank.  
Swiftly the Fairy followed the sound,  
Till it led to a mighty salmon aground,

Mired, and choked with the murderous clay,  
Gasping his lordly life away.  
Quick as thought the Fay undight  
The golden chain of his baldric bright.  
One end he dropped to the struggling fish;  
The other looped in his hands he took,  
And tugged with a right good will and wish  
Till his tiny form like an aspen shook.  
So sore his wings to the task he set  
That the sides of every round link met.  
But the slender haulser parted not;  
The salmon is drawn to the water's brim.  
Bravo, Fairy! thy task is wrought;  
Around the salmon his fellows swim.  
The Fay upgathers the lengthened chain;  
But, hark, the fish is calling again.  
He swears by his lordly river might,  
Thy service fully to requite,  
And bids thee name what treasure most  
Thou prizest of all that his kingdoms boast.  
"Alas!" the Fairy said, "I deem  
To serve my need is beyond thy power;  
I seek the gem of the crystal bower  
O'er the sunless isle in the sunken stream.  
But the darksome waters my seeking foil."  
"Nay," cried the salmon, "be mine the toil.  
Not long from me will the jealous wave  
Hide the jewel thy wishes crave.  
But, apart from the water my strength is lost,  
As, but for thee, I had known to my cost;  
And thou must follow to pluck the prize  
When I have brought thee whither it lies."  
Again did the Fay his baldric fling

To the salmon, who caught its nether ring ;  
One in water, and one in air,  
Again their equal way they fare ;  
But now 'tis the salmon that leads the way,  
And loose hangs the chain from the hands of  
the Fay.

They thrid the tangled corridors  
Draped with moss and drooping vines,  
Through which the drowsy water pours,  
Doubtful whither its flood inclines.  
But suddenly the current dips,  
And, leaving the dark lagoon's expanse,  
Down a rocky pathway trips,  
To the music of its glittering dance.  
But brief is its space of light and song,  
For scarce has the Fairy felt their glow,  
Ere his flight he bends as the waters throng  
Into a cavern's archway low.  
Onward the unseen pilot fares,  
And the Fairy trustful his journey shares.  
Ah, what a sudden chill the dark  
Pours against the Fairy's brow !  
How feebly his lantern's tiny spark  
Slips o'er the writhing water's flow !  
Anon springs out some rocky tush,  
As 'twere his fragile form to crush ;  
Anon the roof shoots down a spear,  
And the leaping waters hiss and peer ;  
While, as if lost in the cavern's bore,  
A wail runs echoing evermore.  
But forward speed the linked pair,  
And now the lamp sheds a brighter glare,—  
Nay, 'tis a glow that mantles and pours

From something within these rocky shores.  
'Tis the burning ruby's dateless gleam  
That flushes and kindles along the stream.  
Yea, now, beneath its cope of light,  
What anchored island cheats the night?  
But the Fairy to isle and crag must doom  
The desolation of endless gloom.  
Beneath the gem the voyagers halt,  
And the Fairy mounts to the crystal vault.  
That groan, did it rise from the watching  
palms?  
That wail, was it born of the rushes' qualms?  
The Fairy neither asked nor thought.  
The jewel from its bed he caught,  
Then held it aloft to light his way,  
And called to the salmon, "Now back to day!"

## IV.

Thin are the icy airs that fan  
Himalay's immemorial snow.  
What wing of bird, or bolt of man  
Can hope to leave those heights below?  
Can hope, though painfully and slow,  
To touch the lowest shouldering peak  
That sees far down the cloud-fleece blow,  
And o'er it climb white summits bleak?  
No wonder the Fairy's rainbow wings  
Drooped in such skyward voyagings;  
Failing, as if the air were gone,  
Ere the last of the cloudy belts they had won.  
Five times with circling flight he strove,  
Five times the winds refused his grasp;

Now lies he in yon banyan grove,  
A fainting sprite with groan and gasp.  
On death he calls to end his shame,  
Disgrace that ne'er can be retrieved ;  
Flings from him with hot words of blame  
The gems with so much toil achieved.  
At last he bares his blade and cries :  
"Dull heart that canst keep on to beat,  
When honor drowned in weakness lies,  
Thus I dislodge thee from thy seat."  
Yea, lift thy blade, but e'er it fall,  
Be sure no wretch thy help may crave.  
Hark, on the wind there floats a call :  
"I die and none will turn to save."  
The Fairy, startled at the sound,  
Leaps upright, and his eye beholds  
A white dove struggling on the ground,  
Crushed in a serpent's slimy folds.  
A bound, and he is by its side,  
But not so lightly yields the snake.  
Ten times his blade in blood is dyed  
Before the rings their tightening slake.  
At last his daring finds reward,  
But, oh, how late release to give !  
The dove falls helpless on the sword,  
Nor, but for gasping, seems to live.  
"Oh, life !" he cries, "yet not for me.  
'Tis for the charge beneath my wing,  
A true-love note, which I must bring,  
Or breaks a heart beyond the sea.  
Thanks, generous Fay, my wings grow light,  
Now I shall pass those peaks of snow.  
But tell me how I may requite

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Thy priceless aid before I go."  
"Might I but cross those crystal peaks,  
How soon my labors would be done!"  
"Lies there the spot thy journey seeks?"  
Replied the dove, "'tis quickly won.  
Thy weight I lightly shall sustain.  
Mount on my back." "Ay," said the Fay,  
"But first a moment to regain  
The jewels that I flung away."—  
Oh, rapture of unhindered flight!  
Oh, buoyant, crystal waves of air!  
'Twere worth long years of earth's delight  
That hour's exultant thrill to share.

## V.

Three moons have waxed, three moons have  
waned  
Since first the Fairy saw the shrine;  
Nor yet one grisly guard hath deigned  
To close an eye in storm or shine.  
No night so dark their demon eyes  
Make not a blaze about the spot;  
Nor noon nor levin glare surprise  
Those iron lids that falter not.  
A starry night draws nigh to dawn;  
No bird-note stirs the slumbering air.  
But, hark! a voice in song is drawn  
Athwart the dusk; it breathes a prayer:  
Ye stars that mark on high  
How night by night I lie,  
No friend but you anigh,  
In freezing dew;

Now, while I lowly bend,  
Your kindly influence lend,  
My toils with triumph end,  
My joys renew.

Your eyes with softness burn ;  
On me, oh ! let them turn ;  
My hapless lot discern,  
My weakness aid.

Your eyes in heaven shine ;  
Their light is not for mine.  
Ye fade, ye make no sign ;  
In vain I've prayed.

He ceased, and was it edge of moon,  
Or seraph's wing that caught his eye,  
Just where the red path of the sun  
Flashed out before it up the sky ?  
The Fairy had no hope to ask ;  
But morning burned to noontide blaze,  
And never from their ceaseless task  
Withdrew the faithful warders' gaze.  
The Fairy shuts his straining eyes ;  
There breathes no wind, and yet a chill  
Draws over him ; in swift surprise  
He looks, and lo ! a miracle.  
A wanness creeps upon the day ;  
The watchers' heads begin to droop ;  
He steals anigh, no heed they pay ;  
Then out the constellations troop.  
The sun hangs dead, and gives no sign,  
The watchers lie as they were dead,  
While through the dusk the Fay has fled,  
And empty stands the ivory shrine.

The Fay far o'er the mountains flew  
Before the light returned ; then first  
Awoke the guards, their loss they knew,  
And in their rage like bubbles burst.

## VI.

Long, long the Fairy wight has flown  
With little rest or stay in flight ;  
And now, at last, upon his sight  
Uplift the wooded heights well known,  
The Catskills' crimped horizon line.  
But, now that place and hour combine,  
Why lags the Fairy on his way ?  
Haply he waits the close of day,  
To meet beneath the moon's pale shine.  
For, as the sun to men is dear,  
So beams the moon to elin eyes ;  
Their mirth awakes with starry skies,  
And morn to them is end of cheer.  
Now darkness falls ; the Fairy stands  
Where months ago he listening stood  
And took the elin maid's commands,—  
What song is this that starts his blood ?  
She sings ; he neither feels nor sees,  
But, ravished, hearkens words like these :

He comes, my pride ;  
He comes to clasp the bride  
His arm hath won.

With joy shall rest  
My head upon his breast,  
My light and sun.

O days of joy,  
Delights too deep to cloy,  
    I hold you fast.  
Ye thought to lag,  
But though your sloth ye brag,  
    Ye come at last.  
Come, hero mine.  
Let now mine arms entwine  
    Thy neck around.  
Let all declare  
The bold hath won the fair,  
    Our fame resound.

She ceased ; the Fairy, light as air,  
Sprang forth his lady-love to greet.  
"Who comes?" she cried, "What footsteps  
    dare  
Profane my inmost bower's retreat?"  
" 'Tis I, thy love." "Oh! thou, 'tis true.  
Thou hast not brought my gifts I ween."  
He answered not, but o'er her threw  
The mantle's quivering folds of green.  
"But not the gems." In either palm  
He placed a gem above all price.  
Her face their light showed pale and calm;  
With tightened lips and downcast eyes.  
"No longer," cried he, "make me wait,  
But yield the prize my arm hath won.  
So ran thy song." Quoth she, "Though done,  
Thy deeds are vain: they come too late."  
"What! wilt thou not be mine?" he cried.  
"Nay," answered she, "already I  
For weeks have been another's bride.

Thou camest not, and he was nigh."  
She ceased ; the Fay all speech disdained,  
And, turning, strode into the dark ;  
With staring eyes that naught did mark,  
And breath that as in fetters strained.

## VII.

Is it any wonder he looked at her ?  
Is it any wonder he loved the maid ?  
Is it any wonder the sight should stir  
His lips to the deed so dearly paid ?  
Far and wide as the Fay had been,  
Such beauty had he never seen.  
Was she not beautiful lying there ?  
The little maiden innocent,  
Lit by the sunshine of her hair,  
Which all the dusk a glory lent.  
Under the darkling hemlock tree,  
Tired of play, she had fallen asleep ;  
Her head on one arm pillowed lay,—  
The sweet face upturned happily,—  
And one hand still did tightly keep  
A fragrant bunch of blossoms gay.  
Her slender ankles were crossed in rest,  
And never the dew more lightly pressed  
The greensward of the wooded hill,  
Than the lithe limbs lying, slender and still,  
Full of swiftness and full of grace.  
She seemed a part of the lovely spot,  
Like an oriole in an elm of June,  
And yet some creature of heavenly race,  
For a moment lighted to fly as soon ;

Yet creature of heavenly kind she was not,  
Nor aught of wild or of woodland birth,  
But one of the gentle maids of earth,  
Who, weary of the woodland way,  
Had fallen asleep 'neath the greenwood tree,  
That stood in the path of the lonely Fay.  
Up the path the Fairy strode,  
His armor gleaming with pearl and gold ;  
The light of his lantern dimly glowed  
Amid the dusk of the hemlocks old.  
The tall ferns nodded above his head,  
At his feet the snaring wild vine spread,  
And around in the forest, far and near,  
There lurked he knew not what shapes of  
fear.

But his heart within him burned like flame,  
And little he recked of friend or foe,  
But words like these from his lips gan flow,  
As on to the fateful tree he came.  
"Is there another race," he cried,  
"Whose beauty is inward, from the heart ;  
Where pride and coldness have no place,  
Or at the touch of love depart ?  
Where love doth evermore abide  
Till fairest beauty in form and face,  
Into loveliness more fair shall run,  
As the starlight into the light of the sun.  
Where may such a maid be found,  
Fair and pure as the elf-maids are,  
Yet warm and loving and tender and sweet,  
And truer than the Northern Star ?  
Where shall one seek her the wide world  
round ?"—

Why, O Fairy, that raptured start,  
With the swift blood beating back to thy  
heart?

Happy dreamer! she lies at thy feet.  
In smiling slumber the maiden lay,  
And at her beauty the wondering Fay  
Stood and stared, as one would stare  
Who had strayed into heaven unaware.  
Then slowly nearer the Fairy stept,  
But still unheeding the maiden slept;  
The long dark lashes lifted not,  
To let the violet eyes unclose,  
Nor any sudden zephyr swept  
Over the soft cheek's opening rose;  
And the Fairy, as one that has no thought,  
Whose being is lost in wonder and bliss,  
On bright wings poising, fluttered above,  
Then, sinking, pressed on her lips a kiss,  
That was homage and blessing and worship  
and love.

### VIII.

But, ah! 'tis a crime in Fairyland  
To love outside the fairy band;  
For the narrow elfin heart and mind  
Are jealous of our human kind;  
And a hundred eyes on bush and tree  
Were strained the Fairy's kiss to see.  
Scarce had his love-enkindled heart  
Led him to play a mortal's part,  
When his mates, like wolves upon their prey  
Surrounded the unguarded Fay.

In the flash of an eye they hold him bound,  
Then drag him away with jeer and mock,  
To the elfin monarch's judgment ground  
And the solemn trial at twelve o'clock.

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I had climbed far up old Cronest's side,  
With the little maiden dewy-eyed.—  
O Sweet, how long that was ago !  
But your eyes still lift their noon-tide  
    glow,  
And still your hand steals into mine  
As fondly as in sweet lang syne.—  
'Twas in the leafy dusk of June,  
When all earth's voices laughed in tune,  
When every blossom wooed the light  
With peeping beauty exquisite.  
Weary at last with the toil and heat,  
We sat with a great cliff at our feet.  
There at the bidding of the maid  
I told the tale that here is traced,  
And while she listened my fingers played  
With the gold that rippled to her waist.  
I ceased ; on the Hudson glanced a sail,  
Nearer an engine puffed its smoke ;  
I watched them across the shimmering vale,  
But soon the maiden the silence broke :  
"Oh ! please go on." "That is all," I said,  
"Except the tale, in the book I read,  
Of the Fairy's penance, at which you wept."  
"Was that this Fairy ?" "The very same ;

And aren't you glad that, whatever came,  
His faith to his mortal love he kept?"

"Oh, yes! and what become of her?"

Persisted the little questioner.

"Ah! that is the best of all," I replied,

"And you should know it if none beside.

You've heard the story of the bees

That stung the lips of Socrates,—

Plato, I mean, but never mind ;—

They left their sweetness all behind.

And so the Fairy's kiss did here,

And soon the maiden, far and near,

Was famed to have at her command

The sweetest kisses in the land.

But that was long and long ago ;

The maiden grew, as you will grow,

But never did in any hour

Her kisses lose their magic power.

Her daughters' daughters now are grown,

With red-lipped maidens of their own,

But all, however plain or fair,

This token for their birthright bear,

And those that feel its witchery say,

It is the Blessing of the Fay."

"What is it?" "Sweetheart, what it is

I cannot tell, I know it's—this."







